



Messenger Newsletter

*First and Grand Avenue
United Methodist Churches*

August 2019

Being Counted

by Pastor Tom Buratovich

I received an invitation from the city of Porterville to attend a CCC meeting. This stands for the Census Counting Committee for the 2020 national census. So why should a local church pastor of the invited to serve? I felt like a plumber being invited to an award ceremony for a law firm.

Our current mayor, Martha Flores, greeted me as I entered the meeting at City Hall. She let me know she was glad that I came that it was important for the faith community in Porterville to be represented. I was the only local church pastor in attendance. Apparently, they chose me to represent the entire faith community! When I stopped to consider it, I am humbled by the privilege of being considered. However, that still did not excite me about the census. It sounded about as exciting as watching grass grow. But the presentation changed my mind quickly.

For instance, Porterville's reporting average for the last census was 35%. That means all the federal funding possible for our area was reduced by 65% when you consider the total sum of financial support help federal government distributes, it becomes clear that we missed an opportunity. This meeting was a chance to correct misconceptions about the census.

One lady who was from the reservation admitted that she grew

up hiding when the census counters came around. Another talked about the insecurity of fieldworkers thinking that being counted meant ICE was soon to visit you. When the significance of the census landed on all of us, it changed our level of enthusiasm for an accurate census count immensely. We saw the light!

As I left that meeting it became clear to me how this meeting mirrored what the mission of the church is. We are to help people understand the significance of the gospel, of Jesus and his love, of the invitation to eternal life now here on earth, the free offer to walk with Jesus every day in an interactive relationship that gives you hope and peace, love and joy, a deepening of relationships and an understanding of your personal sin.

My first month at two churches has been trying. I bounce back and forth between two churches like a pinball, yet it is exhilarating. I am in two different places, to different churches, yet so very similar and familiar. I have known people for longer in one place yet feel that I have known the other so much longer.

I remember when Amy, our daughter was born. I was faced with the dilemma of how I could find the emotional energy to love her. It appeared to me that my love bank account was cash strapped. However, when she was born a hole was blown in the floor to reveal

another compartment of my love. That is strangely what has happened at First Church. Just when I thought I could not love anymore people, not because I did not want to because of personal limits, the floor has been blown out and God has revealed another chamber. God can blow the floor that chamber to another one below would as well.

August and September will represent beginnings. School will start, too early for students and too late for parents. Our at-risk programs will begin Wednesday, August 21. We will begin to go to Vine Street Community Day school again. The choir will start at First Church. First church will host their VBS follow-up event on Sunday, August 18, 2:00 p.m.

Sack Lunch, Clothes Closet, Monday Night Youth, Sierra Hills Bible study (3rd Thursday), women's Bible study, prayer groups, Community Food Bank, Sunday worship all work towards the same goal: to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

We get to do this. We are invited to be a part of it. If you know Jesus, who are a participant of this great mission. I encourage you to find your role and play your part. There is no better way to live.

The 2020 census motto is *Stand and Be Counted!* That can work for our churches too. Stand and be counted in the great cloud of witnesses stand in the presence of Jesus, worship in spirit and truth, and give witness to the redeeming work of God through Jesus.

The month of August is one of my favorite times of the year. This month represents in so many ways new beginnings and exciting times for the youth and children in our church and in our community. Here at Grand Avenue our church family also enters into new beginnings as we begin new classes of our outreach programs for parents and students in our community.

After another summer break filled with fun and the hot California weather our students will make their return to the classroom for another year of education, athletics, and personal growth and they continue on their trek to graduation. We have Jason and Paige entering their freshmen year of college. Joshua and Joseph are going into their senior year of high school. We also have many students entering the in-between years as sophomores and juniors. Each of our students will be blessed with new experiences that will challenge them and in the process produce growth mentally and spiritually. To our students, I encourage you to hold firmly to what you have learned at Grand Ave and at camp about the love of Christ and be secure in the fact that Jesus is with you during your journey. To help you stay on track and continue moving in a forward direction to Jesus, we will have a new Bible study at my home beginning Sunday, August 4. Make sure to mark the date on your calendar because you don't want to miss this opportunity of fellowship and personal growth.

As for our church family, we again have the blessing to connect with young families in our community through the **Teach 1 to**

Lead 1 program and **The Parent Project**. Both of these programs will begin on Wednesday, August 21. Pastor Tom will be heading up **The Parent Project** and Robin Galloway and I will be teaching the elementary **Teach One to Lead One** program. This is an opportunity for each of us here at Grand Avenue to open the doors of our church to our community and provide life-changing skills to individuals in need of these blessings. With having so many new people coming to our church for thirteen weeks in a row during these programs, it provides our church family the favorable time for all of us to use our skills to share to love of Jesus. I encourage each of you to think of different ways of how you can help during these events. Maybe you would like to become a mentor. If you

enjoy cooking, you may like to provide a dinner for our young families who will be hungry after a long day of work, school, and programs. Whatever your talent may be, I encourage you to bless others with it and see the joy you bring to our community.

With so many events beginning in August I ask that you join me in prayer over our teachers, students, and young families in our community. Let us pray that these new beginnings and fresh starts provide positive life-changing blessings for all involved from child to adult. Please pray also for God to reveal to you how your skills can make a difference during these exciting times. Blessings to you all.

God is Love,
Ryan Ridenour
Youth Director, Grand Ave

At-Risk Ministry Opportunities

On Wednesday, August 21, At-risk Ministries will offer two programs for families.

Parent Project, Loving Solutions™ offers concrete solutions for tough kids ages 5-10. Extremely practical tools for out-of-control behavior. We help parents get their family back! Through 10 sessions filled with interactive exercises, parents will learn hand-on skills to stop unwanted behavior, even ADD/ADHD children!

Additionally, we offer **Teach 1 to Lead 1**, Primo ages grades 3-5. This program teaches Universal Principles to kids to help them

build and strengthen foundational values that assist in decision making and healthy habit formation. Starting time is the same.

There is no tuition, there is a \$40 material charge for parent class. Limited scholarships are available. For more information contact Ryan Ridenour at Grand Avenue 784-3791 or Pastor Tom.

If you or someone you know has a passion for kids, we encourage you to seek us out and observe a class. Mentors are desperately needed for this rewarding frontline ministry.

A Good Place to Sit!

“And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.”

Mark 10: 15,16 NIV

It has become an annual tradition for our family to drive to Greenfield Village near Dearborn Michigan, on or around the fourth of July for a special outdoor concert and celebration of our nation's birthday. Greenfield Village is an outdoor museum on about 80 acres of land, adjacent to the Henry Ford Museum. Early life in rural America is enacted there with a courthouse, church, many houses and workshops, several locomotive engines and a large village green.

This year we gathered with friends and family in front of a long stage on the village green where we set up chairs and enjoyed a picnic dinner before the concert. A fife and drum band dressed in costumes similar to those worn in past militias paraded past us as it circled the green.

The weather forecast for that evening had accurately predicted rain. In fact, the rain started falling before we even left home. So, we were forewarned and although it was warm enough outside for t-shirts and shorts, brought rain gear just in case.

When we arrived in Dearborn the weather was mild, although the sky along the horizon seemed to be growing darker. The predicted rainstorm didn't keep people away though. Hundreds of them congregated on the lawn for the show.

The United States Army band and chorus began with a series of popular hit songs that we all enjoyed. Lights and patterns danced across the huge screen

covering the entire back of the stage. Afterwards the Detroit Symphony Orchestra gave a wonderful performance. Instead of being up on the stage this year our daughter, Shanda, got to sit with us down below and be part of the audience.

At some point in the concert, rain began to fall. There was a rustle in the crowd as people began taking out raincoats and umbrellas. It wasn't terribly hard but lasted long enough to drench us all. Lawn chairs formed puddles in the seats, legs got wet, clothes were soaked...and yet the show went on. The MC for the evening congratulated the audience for staying! Who wanted to leave? The best was yet to come!

By intermission, the rain had stopped. The temperature was mild without a breeze. That enabled us to dry out a little, at least the outer layers! It was dark when the second half began. Grandson Nate got up from his chair and asked if he could sit on my lap. We found a blanket that was dry and put it over us as he plopped down on my soggy lap.

Now Nate is getting to be a big boy with long legs and arms. The small chair barely held the two of us. But how nice that he still wanted to sit with me! Those few precious moments took away my grouchiness and inner grumbling over the weather. It wasn't long before he hopped up and went to sit with his mom and brother. So, Al and I claimed the blanket, pushing our chairs closer together. That helped

us stay warm through the rest of the performance despite being wet.

We wouldn't have wanted to miss the Grand Finale anyway, no matter how hard it rained. Eardrum shattering blasts of cannons punctuated Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture, followed by a great fireworks display. Another unforgettable Fourth of July celebration!

Nate's wanting to sit in my lap reminded me of the words of a close friend and Bible study partner, Robin, from our hometown of Springville. Robin said that whenever she was having an especially hard day, she would imagine herself sitting in Jesus' lap and staying there for a while. What a beautiful image of the close relationship He desires to have with each of us!

Feeling discouraged, defeated, disappointed? Climb into Jesus' lap. Let Him wrap His arms of love around you and comfort you. We are never too old or too big to come to the Savior. I've been sitting in His lap a lot lately—a very good place to be!

“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these...”

Submitted by Judy Lowery

Selfie taken by Nate Sachs (on Grandma's lap) with Al and Judy Lowery.



August 2019 Prayer Calendar

Thursday, August 1 - Pray for the ones who are travelling at this time. Pray for safe travels.

Friday, August 2 - Pray for the staff of FUMC as they prepare for Sunday's Worship Service.

Saturday, August 3 - Pray for the Sack Lunch at 9:45 a.m. Pray for the ones who help prepare the food and pray for the receivers. Pray that all will know God's love.

Sunday, August 4 - Pray for Sunday School, Children's Church, Youth Group and Worship Services. Pray also for Ryan Ridenour who will have Youth Group at his home at 5:00 p.m.

Monday, August 5 - Pray for Youth Sports at 5:30 p.m. at GAUMC Fellowship Hall. Pray for the youth of our community that attend.

Tuesday, August 6 - Pray for the teachers and the kids who will start back to school this week and next. Pray for a smooth start for the school year.

Wednesday, August 7 - Pray for all of the Children's Church teachers as they plan lessons and activities for the kids.

Thursday, August 8 - Pray for the Women's Bible Study at 5:00 p.m. at GAUMC. Pray as the ladies come together to learn and grow in Christ.

Friday, August 9 - Pray for the ones who are unable to make it to church due to illness or rehabilitation. Pray for strength and wellness.

Saturday, August 10 - Pray for the Greeters for the Sunday Worship Services and that all will feel welcomed walking through the doors.

Sunday, August 11 - Pray for Sunday School, Children's Church, Youth Group and Worship Services. Pray that we can all come together in worship and song. Pray that we can make a joyful noise for our Lord Jesus Christ.

Monday, August 12 - Pray for all as we start a new week and have to deal with many different situations. Pray that we will know God is with us.

Tuesday, August 13 - Pray for the GAUMC Finance Committee who will meet this evening at 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday, August 14 - Pray for Loving Solutions along with *Teach 1 to Lead 1* at 4:30 p.m. Please pray for all involved.

Thursday, August 15 - Pray for the Trustees at GAUMC who will meet this evening at 6:00 p.m.

Friday, August 16 - Pray that we can reflect on the Bible verse: Proverbs 11:25 - *A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.*

Saturday, August 17 - Pray for FUMC Committee Members. Pray for them as they make important decisions for their church.

Sunday, August 18 - Pray for Sunday School, Children's Church, Youth Groups and Worship Services. Pray for FUMC as they have an Ice Cream Social and movie night featuring "Big Hero 6" at 2:00 p.m.

Monday, August 19 - Pray for our community and pray that we can think of ways to help in our community.

Tuesday, August 20 - Pray for the GAUMC Governing Board meeting at 9:00 a.m. Pray for the ladies of Linda Circle who will meet at GAUMC at 11:00 a.m.

Wednesday, August 21 - Pray for Loving Solutions that will start with *Teach 1 to Lead 1* at 4:30 p.m. at GAUMC. Pray for the kids, parents and mentors may all be touched by God's love.

Thursday, August 22 - Pray for the Women's Bible Study that will take place at 5:00 p.m. at GAUMC.

Friday, August 23 - Pray for Pastor Tom as he completes his sermons for Sunday Worship Services.

Saturday, August 24 - Pray for the Praise Team as they prepare to play music at Sunday Worship Service.

Sunday, August 25 - Pray for Sunday School, Children's Church, Youth Group and Sunday Worship Services. Pray for the Youth Group at Ryan Ridenour's house at 5:00 p.m.



Monday, August 26 - Pray for the homeless and the hungry in our community. Pray that they will have shelter, food and know God's love.

Tuesday, August 27 - Pray for Linda Circle and the hard work they are putting in to preparing for the GAUMC Church Yard Sale that will take place on October 4 and 5.

Wednesday, August 28 - Pray for Loving Solutions along with *Teach 1 to Lead 1* at GAUMC that begins at 4:30 p.m. Pray for all involved -troubled youth, parents and mentors. Pray that all will learn how to make better decisions in their lives.

Thursday, August 29 - Pray that we can ask a friend, family member, neighbor or stranger to Worship Service this Sunday.

Friday, August 30 - Pray that we can be grateful for all the blessings in our lives.

Saturday, August 31 - Pray that we can reflect on this Bible verse today: Romans 15 1-2. *We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up.*

Grand Ave Weekly Schedule

Sundays

8:30 a.m. Sunday School—Fireside Room
9:30 a.m. Worship Service—Sanctuary
5:00 p.m. Youth Bible Study

Mondays

5:30 p.m. Youth Group

Wednesdays

9:00 a.m. All Church Yard Sale Pricing

Thursdays

10:00 a.m. Prayer Group
5:00 p.m. Women's Bible Study (2nd & 4th Thursdays)

Grand Ave August Calendar

Saturday, August 3

9:45 a.m. Sack Lunch

Tuesday, August 13

6:00 p.m. Finance Meeting

Thursday, August 15

6:00 p.m. Trustees Meeting

Tuesday, August 20

9:00 a.m. Church Council Meeting

Tuesday, August 27

9:00 a.m. SPRC Meeting

Happy Birthday!

Josh Gutierrez 8-9
Joseph Sanchez 8-9
George Galloway 8-20
Ryan Ridenour 8-22
Dave Hawkins 8-26
Dwight Brown 8-30



Grand Ave Office Hours:

Monday– Thursday
9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Phone: 559-784-3791

Fax: 559-784-3798

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Announcements

Sermon Video

Watch a video of the sermon during the week or share a link with a friend. Pastor Tom's sermons are posted on www.grandavenue.org/sermon-video each week.

Choir Rehearsal

First Methodist Choir rehearsals begin Wednesday, August 21. Contact Christine Morell for more information at ckmorell78@gmail.com.

Food Bank

The First Methodist Neighborhood Market Food distribution is Thursday, August 15 at 1:00 p.m. Volunteers, please arrive at Noon to help with setup.

Clothes for the Needy

The First Methodist clothes closet is open on the first Saturday of every month for those in our community in need. Volunteers are welcome to help distribute outfits.

Movie and Ice Cream Party

Everyone is invited to First Methodist on Sunday, August 18 at 2:00 p.m. for an afternoon *Movie and Ice Cream Party*. The movie is *Big Hero 6*. Please call the office for more information 784-4232.

Church Yard Sale Pricing

Join the fun at Grand Avenue each Wednesday morning from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. to price items for the October Yard Sale.

Next Newsletter Deadline

Please send information for the Messenger Newsletter to Judy at judy.bur87@gmail.com. The deadline for the September Messenger is **August 19**. Thank you.

First Methodist Office Hours:

Monday, Wednesday

9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Tuesday, Thursday

9:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m.

Phone: 559-784-3791

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